782 826 While keeping his eyes and his left hand closed, he walked without touching the ground with his toes in order to respect "the soul of that which he carried (1). At the edge of the river, the joints were broken,

1. To touch the ground with one's toes amounted to putting the soul of the victim's body in contact with the earth's impurity (see p. 102).

the marrow extracted and poured into the water. After placing their toes on the body, to "give a part of their soul to Faro," the men deposited it gently in the river, into which it sank while they loudly proclaimed the reason for their action. When they returned to their master, they brought him the spirit's gratitude and a little water from the river, which was poured over the royal seat (2).

2. This offering was called nasi, "well-being."

/96/ The upper part of the victim's body was the king's and used for the needs of the state. The tõdyõ first blew into the mouth of the tortured victim so that the "air, in coming out, would take all his words to Faro." Then they buried his head under the king's throne and danced to the rhythm of drums.

726 789 In case of war, the blood which had spilled during the sacrifice was collected by the tõdyõ and dried in the sun; then the residue was carried away and before the assault was thrown in the direction of the town to be attacked. The king who advanced with his army found, according to the formula, "his sacrifice before him" (saraka bla ñe).

782 826 789 2. In case the king was short of funds, the killing took place towards the west and was performed by sticking a bamboo stick into the throat of the victim so that blood would run over the cowrie shells which the king had earned himself "with his own sweat." Thus consecrated, the cowries "attracted gold, silver, and copper to the royal treasury."

The head was placed under the throne. The chest and lungs were dried, reduced to powder, and preserved in a bag which the king kept. When he received his tax-payers, he smeared his face and mouth with this powder, thus forcing the visitor to give. He rubbed his body with it before going to war, causing the warriors to say:

794 778 the rain necessary for cultivation (see p. 217). The agricultural role of the Komo will be described by S. de Ganay in Techniques et rites de l'agriculture.

794 778 784 The main taboo of the ñõ boli is the loss or waste of food. If even a grain of cereal drops to the ground, or into the fire, the members of the millet society are responsible for picking it up and eating it; otherwise the Komo will punish for the failure to do so and the harvest suffers.

794 778 726 The third floor contains the nyama boli, a repository of the forces (nyama) of individuals who have died a violent death (murder, war, execution). The nyama boli used to contain in former times a stone called gõgoro kurube, considered to be the "mother" of the stones thrown by the warriors' sling. It was removed from the sac in case of war and carried to the battlefield by a twin walking at the head of the troops. On its surface were engraved a series of lines representing the king, the warriors, and their wives. It gathered all the souls of those dead in combat and received their blood as an offering.

794 778 The nyama boli is, moreover, responsible for the soul of the crops and a repository for the souls of sacrificed animals; it also receives the "nyama of the words" of the members. It shares with the ñõ boli the responsibility for the cultivations and confers in this way great power to the society.

The sac contains in its lower part a mixture of coagulated blood and gold, and in its upper part a mixture of charcoal powder, pepper, and honey, which gives power to the nyama with which the sac is loaded. The taboo of the nyama boli is the rapid death of victims [782] which are sacrificed to it; only slow death confers effective nyama.

Upon the ground of the sanctuary, along with the dance costume of the mask, nya, are placed small altars intended either for sale, or for the creation of the new Komo, or for individual purposes. Animal horns, both byẽ ba (literally, big horn) and byẽ ni (literally, little horn), are also placed there; they contain powder for ritual usage, korti, whose dangerous action takes place during the times the mask is taken out (1).

1. The various mixtures used for the religious practices of the Bambara

614 consultation likewise underwent changes. In the beginning there
*173 was no great amount of dissension within the furu-ba, but gradu-
578 ally, as the importance of the clan grew and the wealth of influ-
ential members increased, divergent opinions arose, held by strong and determined partisans. Then the dyon'-kuntigi were opposed among themselves, and the recurrent periods of anarchy bear witness to the consequences of these internal quarrels.

Organization of the Clan

614 The army. The office of fama is dominated by the need
721 to ensure the prosperity of the clan since, in theory, the clan's only reason for existence is that of procuring for its members as many material satisfactions as possible.

The usual way to make a fortune among these people was through armed pillage. When a fama was elected, the bow and quiver symbolized the clan's activity, and according to the reasoning of Kanou-ba-nyouma, it was essential that the arrows should hit someone. Thus, it was necessary to go to war. That was the way to acquire slaves, by means of which the great -- and everyone aspired to be such -- satisfied their desires. That is why the essential organization in the clan was the armed force. [311]

614 This organization was based on the distribution of the
701 slaves among chiefdoms (dyon'-kuntigi-ya). Observed as a whole, the army was composed of a certain number of sections called sen' (literally, "foot"). This was not a specific unit, but merely the name used to designate an organized group under the leadership of a chief. Each sen' had a variable number of men. The bolo (literally, "arm") was a "band" made up of a likewise variable number of sen' and commanded by an important chief.

614 When the army was drawn up for battle, it faced the
●726 enemy with a central mass called disi (literally, "chest") made up of the corps of sofa, flanked on the right and the left by bolo called, respectively, kini-n-bolo (right arm) and numa-n-bolo (left arm) (1). Each of these bolo were made up of furu-ba dyon'

1. Note this anthropomorphism applied to the army, which thus included head, arm, feet, chest.

614 surrounded by ton'-dyon'. Behind the disi there was a special
●726 reserve composed only of ton'-dyon'; this was the ton'-koro-bolo.

The fama himself designated the leader (keli-tigi) of all
614 the expeditions of war. This might be one of the dyon'-kuntigi or
701 some member of the community of the fama; sometimes the fama himself might take command.

The personal protection of the fama was the duty of the corps of sofa. In principle, considering the etymology of the name, the sofa were supposed to take care of the horses; this does not mean that they were necessarily horsemen or even grooms. The youngest served as pages and sometimes as grooms; the older ones were confidential aides to whom the fama entrusted missions. The sofa constituted one part -- and by no means the least important -- of what might be called the household of the fama: an assemblage of persons employed for various duties under the immediate authority of the fama.

[727] They were recruited from young prisoners taken in raids and other operations of war.

When the fama led an expedition which was engaged for some time or when he took part in some important affair, he liked to arrange and to preside over the soli of the boys of the conquered people and to have one or more of his many children take part. [312] This was a means of assuring himself of the devotion, generally regarded as unfailing, of these soli-ma whose "birth" into man's estate he had honored and who, by virtue of the ceremony itself, were thus linked to some of his own children. Mostly these young men would then swell the ranks of the sofa.

This army, which might be said to be a regular army, theoretically received everything it needed from the fama: mounts, equipment, weapons, ammunition, etc. This justified the very considerable share of booty kept by the fama himself; he was thus repaid for what he had furnished, was provided with resources needed to replace what had been destroyed, and finally, was able to add to the store of equipment needed to make war. There was also the special need to increase the clan's treasury with a view to all possible eventualities.

The army was augmented by allied or volunteer contingents. The allies had a solemn agreement with the clan, based on a

534 614 701 The xylophone (bala) consists of a table made of strips of hardwood, with a gourd under each strip, like a resonator; the size of each gourd depends on the note desired. A section of the gourd is stopped by the vibrating surface which is a white material very closely woven like a cobweb. When it is played well, the bala produces various tunes, but they seem very thin compared to the noise of the drums and the shrieking of the trumpets. [316]

The accessory bells are of no particular interest.

538 701 No expedition of any consequence ever set out without a griot (dyeli) (1). The griot has acquired a deplorable reputation

1. See above, pp. et seq., on the dyeli.

because of the fact that too often he uses his fluency to exploit the rich and powerful. This should not hide the fact, however, that the griot has often played a role not lacking in grandeur. In addition to being the official archivist of one or more families, he was also, in the native sense, a kind of epic bard who told his [534] tales in song, accompanying himself on a stringed instrument similar to a guitar or a rudimentary harp. When told by him, the traditions, involved with those miracles so dear to the native, had something of the quality of our medieval epics. In that respect, at least, the griot truly deserved his title of dyeli (master).

Unfortunately, however, being reduced to earning his keep by making use of his information, he resorted to slander and calumny. This made him so much to be feared that in order to buy his silence the victims despoiled themselves for his benefit, as did those whom he intoxicated with base flattery.

538 701 ● 726 In the army the griot stirred and encouraged the brave men. On the eve of an important engagement or shortly before it, a large assembly customarily was held, and roused by the epic poems of the griot no less than by the war dances and copious libations, the warriors promised under oath to perform such and such acts of great courage. It was then the duty of the griot to take public note, so to speak, of this commitment and later,

538 701 726 when the action had occurred, to celebrate the glory of its author. If, however, events showed that there had been mere bravado, the griot was then expected to stigmatize the braggart's cowardice -- something he never failed to do, since he found it just as profitable as to celebrate the glory of a hero.

At a critical hour when the army threatened to yield to the baser instincts engendered by rout, panic, and defeat, the griot often had the fortunate ability to arouse failing courage, sometimes [317] with cutting sarcasm, sometimes by exalting the lofty achievements of the ancestors, sometimes by setting forth in a tragic light the lot of the defeated. The chronicle shows him in this role when Ma-n-son, held in check by the stubborn resistance of Tyitya, sees himself -- final disgrace -- abandoned by his wives who have decided to return to Ségou. All through the night the griot sang battle songs, and at dawn the terrible assault proved that the army had recovered its spirit.

This handler of words was undoubtedly a formidable "master." He was said to know words that kill, since he was aware of the actions dominating every person's life. When Ma-n-son's twelve wives came in a body and told him that they had resolved to return without him to Ségou because they were all the more homesick when they felt that defeat was at hand, he ordered them to repeat their words before the griot whom he had summoned. With their action thus publicly noted, he gave them leave to depart, knowing that he would be able to avenge himself for their desertion whenever he decided to do so.

The songs of the griot, retold and repeated by the warriors and the people, gave memorable actions ineffaceable lineaments. The chronicle tells us that when the expedition against Dina was undertaken, the griot improvised the song which begins: "In the shade of the bushy kaminya tree, the hen cannot tell a grain of millet from a grain of sand." This meant that, in the confusion of battle, a warrior can make no distinctions. In fact, the country was completely laid waste during this expedition, and the booty was so abundant that forever after the griot had only to sing this song to arouse the warlike ardor of the ton'-dyon'.

538 814 A man of high rank is always accompanied by his griot, who is both a confidant and a mere factotum. It is true, of course,